

## Message Text

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21

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-04 IO-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-05 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 CIEP-01 TRSE-00 EB-07 AID-05

/083 W

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R 051653Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY BERN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9934

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

USMISSION GENEVA

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BERN 4556

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EFIN, PINT, ET, SZ

SUBJ: FINANCIAL HOLDINGS OF EX-EMPEROR OF ETHIOPIA IN SWITZERLAND

REF: ADDIS 14366

1. SWISS FEDERAL COUNCIL (CABINET) AT REGULAR WEEKLY SESSION DECEMBER 2 HEARD REPORT BY FOREIGN MINISTER GRABER ON ETHIOPIAN SITUATION AND IN PUBLIC STATEMENT FOLLOWING MEETING EXPRESSED HOPE THAT PEACEFUL CONDITIONS WOULD BE RESTORED AND THAT LEGAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS RESPECTED. FEDERAL COUNCIL ALSO TOOK NOTE OF ETHIOPIAN INTEREST IN ACQUIRING FINANCIL HOLDINGS OF EX-EMPEROR, NOTED COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE SWISS BANKS FROM STATE CONTROL, BUT SAID IT NEVERTHELESS WILLING RECEIVE ETHIOPIAN DELEGATION.

2. FOREIGN MINISTRY PRESS SPOKESMAN TOLD DCM THAT SUBJECT OF ALLEGED HOLDINGS IN SWITZERLAND HAD ATTRACTED GREAT INTEREST OF FOREIGN JOURNALISTS AND HE HAD FOUND GREAT DIFFICULTY IN EXPLAINING TO THEIR SATISFACTION SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH SWISS REGARD BANK SECRECY.

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3. DURING LUNCHEON WITH AMBASSADOR DECEMBER 4, SEVERAL PROMINENT GENEVA BANKERS EXPRESSED FIRM HOPE THAT GOS WILL NOT PUT ANY PRESSURE ON BANKS TO REVEAL INFO RE HOLDINGS OF FORMER EMPEROR AND IF GOS SHOULD, THAT SWISS BANKS FIRMLY RESIST UNLESS EX-EMPEROR COMES PERSONALLY TO SWITZERLAND. THEY COMPARED ETHIOPIAN CASE WITH THAT OF PRE-SECOND WORLD WAR WHEN HITLER SOUGHT RECOVERY FROM SWISS BANKS OF JEWISH AND OTHER FINANCIAL HOLDINGS. ON OTHER HAND, WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THERE WERE CERTAINLY FUNDS IN SWITZERLAND, OUR SOURCES DOUBTED VERY MUCH THAT THEY WERE NEARLY AS SUBSTANTIAL AS PRESS REPORTS HAD SUGGESTED. SENIOR MANAGER OF GENEVA BRANCH OF ONE OF LARGEST SWISS BANKS SAID HIS BANK HAD QUIETLY UNDERTAKEN SEARCH FOR DEPOSITS WITH NEGATIVE RESULTS THUS FAR. SAME INDIVIDUAL HAD KNOWN HAILE SELASSIE WHEN HE LIVED IN SWITZERLAND IN MID-1930'S, AND ON BASIS THIS ACQUAINTANCESHIP, EXPRESSED DOUBT THAT HE HAD FINANCIAL SOPHISTICATION PERSONALLY TO MAKE WIDE USE OF POSSIBILITIES OFFERED IN SWITZERLAND.

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